

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR NU VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN REACTION TO NICARAGUAN SITUATION

REF: (A) CARACAS 9098 B) CARACAS 9203

1. SUMMARY: AS THE WEEK WORE ON, THE NICARAGUAN ISSUE BEGAN TO DIE DOWN A BIT, ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL PRESS CONTINUED TO HEADLINE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENTS AT THE OAS AND WITHIN NICARAGUA. AFTER VENEZUELA'S INITIATIVE WAS FRUSTRATED IN THE OAS, PEREZ, IN THE FACE OF INCREASING CRITICISM FROM THE OPPOSITION COPEI PARTY, FOUND HIMSELF ON THE DEFENSIVE AND FORCED ALONG WITH OTHER AD SPOKESMEN TO DEFEND HIS NICARAGUAN POLICY, IN PARTICULAR VENEZUELA'S OAS PERFORMANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. EARLIER IN THE WEEK, EX-PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA ADDED HIS CRITICISM OF THE GOV'S NICARAGUAN POLICY, CHARACTERIZING IT AS INCOHERENT AND PUBLICLY CAUTIONING PEREZ AGAINST PERSONNAL TAKING THE ISSUE TO THE UN SINCE "THE VENEZUELAN POSITION WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY OTHER DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS" AND WOULD BE MANIPUTLATED BY "TOTALITARIAN OR UNDEMOCRATIC THIRD WORLD REGIMES." MINISTER OF INFORMATION CELESTINO ARMAS CALLED THIS AND OTHER CRITICISM "STERILE DEBATE" AND SAID THAT VENEZUELANSHOULD KEEP DIFFERENCES OF
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OPINION WITHIN THE COUNTRY'S BORDERS. ACCION DEMOCRATICA PRESIDENT GONZALO BARRIOS RAPPELLED THE OPPOSITION SAYING THE COPEYANOS AS USUAL "TAKE UP THE OPPOSITION FOR OPPOSITION'S SAKE WHEN THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN ELECTORAL DIFFICULTIES." AD PARTY WHIP, JAIME LUSINCHI ALSO ANSWERED CRITICISM FROM FORMER VICE-FOREIGN MINISTER JOSE ALBERTO VELASCO (REF A) SAYING THE GOV HAD INDEED CONSULTED WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS

ON ITS OAS INITIATIVE, AND CHIDED VELASCO FOR ACCUSING THE GOV OF MISHANDLING NICARAGUA NOTING THAT HE AS VICE MINISTER HAD FAILED TO CONDEMN THE SOMOZA REGIME.

3. COPEI SENATOR GODOFREDO GONZALEZ ATTACKED FROM ANOTHER ANGLE, CHARGING THAT PEREZ HAD HELPED FINANCE THE SOMOZA REGIME WITH A \$283 MILLION DOLLAR LOAN MADE TO NICARAGUA IN 1974. PEREZ THEN TROTTED OUT HIS ALTER EGO, SECRETARY OF THE PRESIDENCY CARMELO LAURIA TO EXPLAIN THAT CENTRAL AMERICAN COOPERATION PROGRAMS WERE FOR THE "BENEFIT OF PEOPLE AS A WHOLE AND NOT FOR ONE PERSON." TO RE-EMPHASIZE THE POINT, THE DIRECTOR OF THE VENEZUELAN INVESTMENT FUND, CESAR EGANA, ALSO PUBLICLY EXPLAINED THAT THESE FUNDS WERE INTENDED TO COMPLEMENT OTHER LONG-TERM FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NICARAGUA. A LETTER FROM PEREZ AND COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT TURBAY TO THE UN ON NICARAGUA, PUBLISHED ON SEPTM 28 BY LOCAL PRESS (REF B), DREW PRESS ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE PARTISAN BICKERING OVER NICARAGUA AND BACK TO THE GOV'S EFFORTS TO FORCE INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON THE NICARAGUAN PROBLEM.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH NICARAGUA REMAINS AN IMPORTANT TOPIC FOR BOTH THE GOV AND THE PRESS, SOME OF THE HEAT HAS DEMINISHED FROM THE ISSUE, REFLECTED BY THE PARTISAN DEBATE THAT HAS BEEN SPAWNED DURING THE WEEK. PEREZ, WHILE NO LONGER PREOCCUPIED AS BEFORE WITH NICARAGUA, CONTINUES TO PRESS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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INTERNATIONAL ACTION AGAINST THE SOMOZA REGIME, IN PART TO SAVE HIMSELF FROM FURTHER CRITICISM THAT THIS NICARAGUAN ACTIONS WERE ALL HEAT AND NO LIGHT. PEREZ HAS ALSO CONTINUED TO WAFFLE ON HIS EARLIER DECISION TO GO TO THE UN. THE HEAVY CRITICISMS FROM THE OPPOSITION COPEI PARTY, TOGETHER WITH AN ADDITIONAL WEEK TO MULL OVER HIS EARLIER ANNOUNCEMENT APPEARS RESPONSIBLE FOR PEREZ' CONTINUED INDECISION ABOUT SPEAKING BEFORE THE UN ON NICARAGUA. END COMMENT.
CROWLEY

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